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MAN-ON-THE-CORNER

DISCUSSES THE WASHINGTON THEATERS.

Silly Discrimination Against Reputable Colored People Exposed and Denounced—Civil Rights Law a Dead Letter in the Nation's Capital—Politicians Who Sell Out—A Resume of Follies as They Fly.

If Polonius should meet "The Man on the Corner" just after the latter had left a Washington theater he might shake his hoary head omnisciently and whisper: "Still harping on my daughter." Yes, it is the same old thing, an inexhaustible subject, a deep-dyed outrage, this detestable race prejudice in the theaters of the nation's capital. It is a thread-bare excuse that the town is overrun with "bad niggers." There are bad Negroes here, and there are bad white people. The sins of a bunch of rascally white men are not visited upon the entire race, no white man is "turned down" at a theater, restaurant or other public place because of what is done by Caucasian toughs at Chesapeake Junction or Swampoodle. By the same token, why should a refined, educated and tastefully attired colored couple be denied admission to the Lafayette Square opera house or Chase's "polite vaudeville" theaters because of the uncouth and noisy rabble reputed to hold high carnival in South Washington? Why not insist that "every tub shall stand upon its own bottom." That every person, white or black, shall stand upon his or her individual merit? Surely, a ticket seller can trust to his judgment to decide whether an applicant for admission is desirable or otherwise, apart from any consideration of color.

The situation just now is something "force." The patronage of the Negro is not wanted at any house of amusement in Washington, save in the gallery, where ladies do not care to go, unless the occasion be an extraordinary one. Remaining away protects our feelings, but does not alter conditions. Besides, we want to witness the plays that have made big successes elsewhere and enjoy the finished work of the stellar actors, and we want to be welcomed as other well-behaved people are. We do not mind mixing up with white folks—if they are nice. At the Columbia and the National we are tolerated, but our reception is not cordial. At the Academy, where lurid melodramas holds sway, and the crowds of both races are "bum," the treatment accorded the Negro is vile. After a few seats in the balcony are sold, the remaining Negroes are forced into the "peanut gallery," and at most performances this portion of the house is almost exclusively col-

MEN OF THE HOUR



HON. JOHN S. DURHAM.

Former Minister to Haiti—Statesman, Scholar and Linguist Recently Delegated as Associate Attorney for the Spanish Claims Commission.

ored. Chase's theater does not invite negro patronage to all, but provision is made for a few who venture there in the back row of a corner of the upper gallery, so far from the stage that full-sized artists look like Lilliputians. Although there may be but a fringe of boys and shop-keepers around the front tiers of this gallery, who have gotten in on passes earned by displaying lithographs in windows, the Negro must sit in the rear corner with a yawning chasm of dark and vacant seats between them and the sparse audience at the railing. Last week colored people who were anxious to see Cole and Johnson, foremost performers of our own race, were grossly insulted at Chase's, being shown no consideration whatever by the management or the bullies who pass as special policemen. These burly fellows will throw a Negro out in a minute if he shows any inclination to resent the unlawful degradation practiced there, and place against him a charge of "disorderly conduct." To avoid possible trouble and a repetition of the trying scenes occurring when Williams and Walker played at this house, Manager Chase made every effort to conceal the fact that Cole and Johnson were negroes, hoping thereby that no large number of colored people would be attracted, to the discomfort of his white customers. Yes, the

Negro who "buts into" a Washington theater is pretty sure to have his feelings hurt, as the habit of weaving insults has not yet become fashionable.

What is to be done about it? I do not know. The conviction of managers for violating the civil rights law is impassible and a civil suit for damages is unprofitable. Can the Negro build a theater of his own? Yes, he can, but he won't. Our people here prefer to accept all sorts of humiliations and snubs from white people to putting their heads and means together to supply their own pleasure resorts for the summer and theatrical amusements during the winter. The city is honey-combed with the "good nigger" element, who bow down and worship any specimen of human being that wears a white skin, and condemn the more manly ones among us who insist upon the full panoply of citizenship. We can do better, but I fear we shall wait a great many more years before we acquire the white man's pioneer spirit and his disposition to conquer all that bars his way to that which he desires. It is a fair question, where in this broad land of our would we find a community of 90,000 white people without a

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EDITOR FORTUNE FETED

DINNER TO THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMISSIONER.

Conditions in our Insular Possessions Will be Ably Investigated and Reported by the Fittest Afro-American—The Race's Unwavering Guide, Philosopher and Friend Appropriately Lauded at Gray and Costley's Cafe.

Hon. T. Thomas Fortune, the brilliant editor of the New York Age, who has just been accorded honorable recognition at the hands of the administration, was the guest of honor at an elegant dinner given on Friday evening of last week at Gray and Costley's Palace cafe. Covers were laid for twelve, and the menu was gotten up in accord with the highest metropolitan standard, which is characteristic of all things done by the enterprising men who conduct this business. The bill of fare included everything in season, with especial selects on half shell and canvas-back duck as chef-d'oeuvre, and was a gastronomic triumph that has not been excelled for perfection of detail in this city.

After coffee the speech-making began with Judge Robert H. Terrell as toast master. He described the appointment of Mr. Fortune as a special commissioner to investigate conditions in our insular possessions as one of peculiar fitness, as Mr. Fortune is a student of governmental systems, is well informed on all matters of history, is a keen observer, and a patriotic American. His conclusion, therefore, will be of vast benefit to this government and the designation of Mr. Fortune is alike a high compliment to him and the entire race. The recognition is richly deserved, and while somewhat tardy, is none the less welcome.

Judge Terrell then introduced in turn each gentleman present, all of whom congratulated Mr. Fortune on the rare honor which had come to him and bespoke for him great success in his new field. His career as a journalist and man of affairs was lauded in elaborate fashion, his unwavering fidelity to the interests of the race being especially extolled. The gentlemen who spoke were: Ex-gov. P. B. S. Pinchback, Register J. W. Lyons, ex-Congressman George H. White, Assistant Register Cyrus Field Adams, Judge E. M. Hewlett, Messrs. Whitfield McKinley, D. B. McCary, R. W. Thompson, Roscoe C. Simmons, and W. T. Menard.

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